

Achieving Quality and Safety Improvement

Improvement Cymru Strategy

2021-2026



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Foreword



It's time we relook at how we approach improvement in our care system in Wales. Moving away from national improvement programmes of work to regional improvement support, tailored to local need. This is what our partners tell us they need, an all-Wales improvement team here to support you to understand, manage and overcome your improvement challenges. A team you can rely on to develop, coach and guide you, working in partnership to provide better care for the people of Wales.

Our new Improvement Cymru Strategy 2021-2026 – Achieving Quality and Safety Improvement, outlines our new focus and describes how we will work together to achieve this with you.

We are all aware of how the pandemic has tested our care system and brought us together to save lives across Wales on a level not seen in modern times. For many it has highlighted the need to relook at safety and harm reduction, to consider it across the continuum of care, within a whole system including primary care, rather than the traditional focus on secondary care.

This is no simple task, it will require keen teamwork and a pragmatic, strategic approach to working towards improvement together but the benefits for the system and the people of Wales will be significant. With our ability to look at the whole picture with an improvement lens and your local experience and expertise we can together embed an improvement ethos at the heart of our system to provide better care for all. Taking a patient centric approach to ensure we all receive the right care, in the right place, at the right time.

This is our focus at Improvement Cymru: to support you to manage for quality and safety across care in Wales, support you to embed the Quality Act and support you to deliver the national priorities for NHS Wales outlined by Welsh Government.

To help organisations achieve this we are launching our new programme: 'Safe Care Together,' offering bespoke support to organisations to identify and improve quality and safety priorities. Complemented by the wider work of Improvement Cymru. Any health board or trust who wants our support can join the Safe Care Together programme and we look forward to working together with you.

Thank you for taking the time to read our strategy. We will be providing regular updates on our progress, so please check back with us to see how we are doing and to share your thoughts.

Professor John Boulton

Director of Improvement Cymru
Director of NHS Quality Improvement and Patient Safety

Introduction

Our aim is to support the creation of the best quality health and care system for Wales so that everyone has access to safe, effective and efficient care in the right place and at the right time across the whole care system.

To do this we work alongside organisations to create the conditions, build the capability and make the connections for improvement to flourish.

We are ambitious about our role in supporting the bold agenda set out in *A Healthier Wales* (2018) which describes a whole system approach to health and social care. Now in the context of this stage of the pandemic and moving into a recovery phase, it is essential that the support that Improvement Cymru offers to organisations is tailored and contextualized to local need to enable them to respond to the strengthened duty of quality and embed the Quality Act. We will also support organisations to deliver the eight priorities for NHS Wales outlined by the Minister for Health and Social Care. This is why we have evolved our approach into one new programme: 'Safe Care Together.' Complemented by the wider work of Improvement Cymru, the Safe Care Together programme will offer bespoke support to organisations to identify and improve quality and safety priorities.

Putting quality and safety above all else is the first NHS Wales core value. This focus has been strengthened more recently through the *Health and Social Care (Quality and Engagement) (Wales) Act (2020)*, the *National Clinical Framework for Wales (2021)* and the *Quality and Safety Framework (2021)*. Collectively these set out an aspiration for quality-led health and care services, underpinned by prudent healthcare principles, value-based healthcare and the quadruple aim.

In response, and in the context of the challenges at this stage of the pandemic and moving into a recovery phase, we have evolved our approach to:

- Reflect a stronger focus on supporting organisations to drive their improvements rather than individual national programmes, and co-designing our work with them.
- Provide tailored support for senior leaders, managers and frontline staff to address their quality and safety challenges in the context of the pandemic and recent policy changes.
- Enable organisations to improve quality and safety, as defined by their service users, families, carers and workforce, and engage them in aspects of care at all levels and in all settings across the continuum of care including primary care.
- Support organisations to rebalance care away from hospitals and focus on preventing and reducing pre- and post-COVID19 harms across the continuum of care.
- Address the technical, social and cultural elements required to spread and scale improvements in any setting.

By working in partnership with Improvement Cymru organisations will be supported to embed the Quality Act.

Responding to the health and care context at this stage of the pandemic

We have provided national improvement support for quality and safety to NHS Wales since 2008. In response to the *OECD Reviews of Health Care Quality: United Kingdom (2016)*, the *Parliamentary Review (2018)* and *A Healthier Wales*, we rebranded from 1000 Lives Improvement to Improvement Cymru and evolved our work.

These changes provided a firm foundation on which to continue to drive improvement. However, over the past 18 months the system has changed considerably as a result of the pandemic and further policy developments. Organisations are facing the challenge of preventing and reducing pre- and post-COVID19 avoidable harms, as well as needing to resume and transform their services to ensure people always receive high quality, safe care. The pandemic forced many services to evolve at pace and implement innovative practice, and there is the opportunity to build on this momentum.

This period has given us the opportunity to explore the broader challenges of improvement and has required us to evolve our ways of working to support organisations at this stage of the pandemic, moving into a recovery phase and beyond. Our own experience, the experience of the international improvement community and recent literature has highlighted that our support should focus on local ownership and capability for improvement, and broaden the scope beyond the traditional view of quality improvement.

Our strategy is underpinned by a wider appreciation of improvement sciences – meaning we support organisations to transform by focusing on how care is delivered, how health and care professionals work together to deliver that care, and how the health system can improve care and health care delivery.

This requires a new approach to improvement which recognises:

- Quality improvement is not sufficient by itself. It must be part of a wider approach to managing quality and improving safety.
- Our support has traditionally focused on improvement at the frontline. This must shift to working alongside leaders in order to strategically focus on system-wide improvement and to enable both improvement and control to take place at the frontline.
- Improvement must overcome the ‘chasms’ that inhibit the spread and scalability of new ideas and effective practices to achieve system-wide transformation.

Our strategic priorities

To achieve our aim, we have three strategic priorities:

- Support health and care organisations to redesign and continuously improve the service they provide.
- Support a focus on reduction in avoidable harm and safety within systems of care.
- Sustainably build improvement capability within the health and care system.

We are a directorate within Public Health Wales, and within our work we continually uphold the organisational values of Public Health Wales – to ‘work together with trust and respect to make a difference.’ We measure the progress we make against these values and the priorities above.

Our role is to coach and support organisations to make continuous and sustainable improvements. We work alongside organisations to apply evidence-based tools, techniques and methodologies to improve multiple pathways across the continuum of care. To ensure that improvements are sustained and systematic we work with multiple layers within organisations to focus on the whole quality cycle – from planning to improvement and control.

By ensuring that we work locally and at every level in the system we are well placed to understand the context and challenges facing organisations, and we can more effectively provide support and coaching to drive improvement forward.

Our new programme: Safe Care Together

To enable us to deliver our strategic priorities we bring all of our support into one new programme for the health and care system. This offer is called Safe Care Together and is our nationally coordinated, locally delivered programme of work. It is open to all health boards and trusts to join.

Safe Care Together enables organisations to improve the quality and safety of care across their systems. By joining the programme, organisations will have the opportunity to work together with Improvement Cymru to make improvements in their patient safety priorities and the various elements of patient pathways that impact on and are impacted by safety and the challenges of the pandemic.

We are focused on supporting organisations at a local level to meet national priorities. Together we can achieve improved outcomes in key system-wide safety areas such as falls, pressure ulcers, medicines safety, infection prevention and control, acute deterioration, and surgical complications. We bring together a suite of evidence-based enablers to test, spread and scale interventions in these safety areas.

We will continue to develop this programme and the priority areas to meet the changing needs of the organisations we work with over time. In doing this, we will ensure that we engage and involve those who provide services as well as those who access them.

There are three components to the Safe Care Together programme which support organisations with their priorities to improve quality and safety – both vertically through the organisation's structure and horizontally across the continuum of care:

1. Developing an organisational approach to quality outcomes
2. Spreading and Scaling Safe Care
3. A behaviour change campaign.

1. Developing an organisational approach to quality outcomes

System-wide quality requires transformational leadership that has quality at the heart of its strategic approach to managing the organisation. *The Quality and Safety Framework (2021)* sets out the aspiration for a quality-led health and care service, with organisations needing to operate within an effective quality management system.

Our new organisational approach to quality outcomes takes learning from high performing organisations and focuses on strengthening a system-wide approach to quality. It is underpinned by the “Quality as an Organisational Strategy” methodology and works with system leaders to identify their strategic system-wide quality and safety priorities for improvement, and build and align their improvement capability to achieve transformation in these priorities.

We will provide nationally coordinated and locally delivered support for executive teams to explore how they lead for quality and what this looks like as a strategy and philosophy throughout the organisation. It draws upon, and provides access to, internationally recognised leaders from high performing systems to provide support and learning for health and care leaders in Wales. This enables executive teams to embed a quality management system approach throughout their organisations.

2. Spreading and Scaling Safe Care

Building on the learning from the Safer Patients Initiative and the 1000 Lives Campaign, we provide intensive support to organisations for their local safety priorities using Improvement Cymru’s Fundamentals in Safe Care.

The Fundamentals in Safe Care combines evidence-based enablers and tools to reduce variation and increase reliability in processes of care and address the bottlenecks that impact on and are impacted by safety and the challenges of the pandemic. It offers a practical package of evidence-based safety enablers that can be used across the continuum of care:

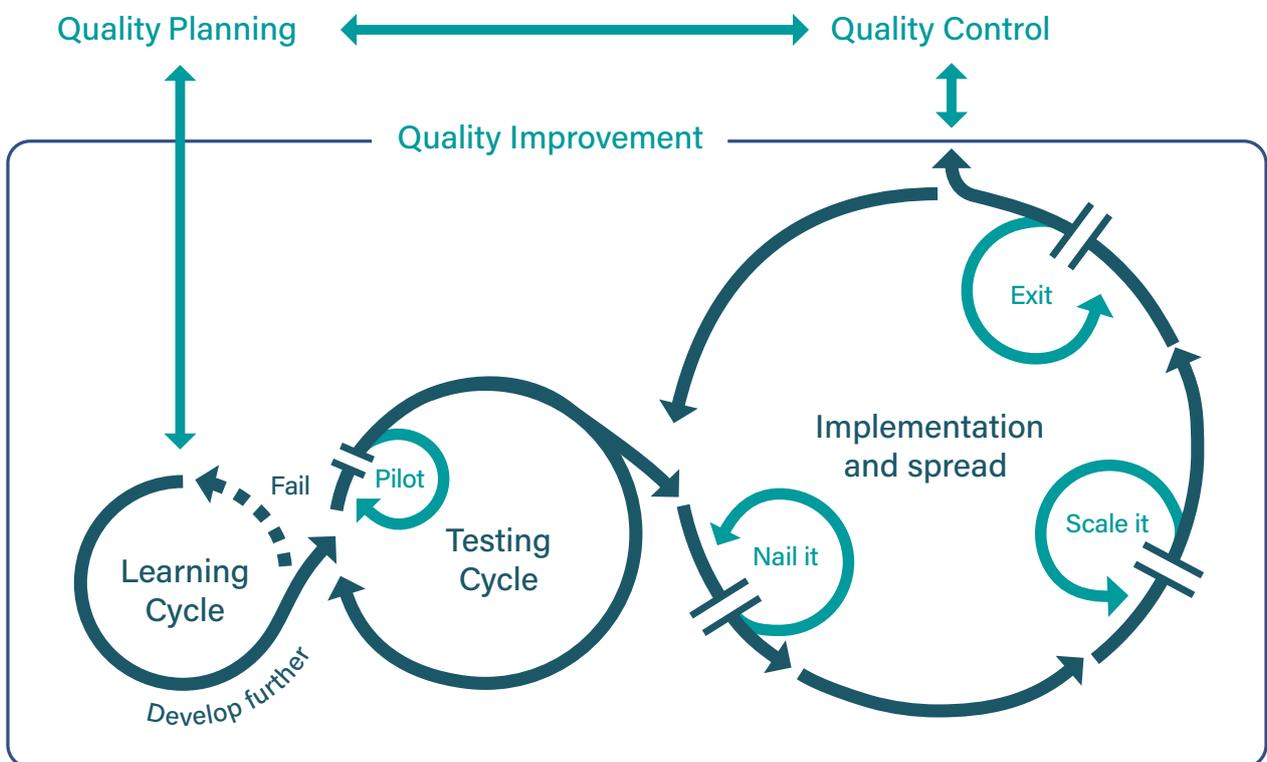
1. Safe and reliable care processes
2. Transformational leadership for safe care
3. Teamwork culture and skills for safe care
4. Communication for safe care
5. Safe and Person-centred care.

We work with organisations to apply these enablers to make improvements in the system-wide quality and safety areas that are important to them, and support the embedding of evidence-based clinical and operational improvements in areas such as falls, pressure ulcers, medicines safety, infection prevention and control, acute deterioration, and surgical complications.

Using Improvement Cymru’s Delivery Framework, organisations receive tailored and intensive coaching to support the spread and scale of improvements. National learning sets complement the intensive local support, as well as a series of masterclasses to provide opportunities to share learning, scale improvements at pace and encourage a “Once for Wales” approach.

Our Delivery Framework

The Delivery Framework builds on our experience and international experience and literature to focus on overcoming the ‘chasms’ that inhibit the spread and scale of new ideas and effective practices to improve care. It offers a systematic, repeatable process that adapts to the specific needs of each healthcare context and recognises that different improvement capabilities, leadership styles, communication styles and methods, and measurement systems are needed to achieve spread and scale. These enablers provide the foundations for the Fundamentals in Safe Care.



We facilitate change by using the Delivery Framework and working on-site alongside an organisation's improvement team to swarm on problems and take a “war room” approach, with the aim of testing change at pace. We work with organisations to move from problem definition, to designing and testing solutions, to sustained improvements that become everyday practice by frontline staff.

3. A behaviour change campaign

Our behaviour change campaign engages all levels of health and care staff using a “hearts and minds” approach to create a movement for quality, safety and improvement.

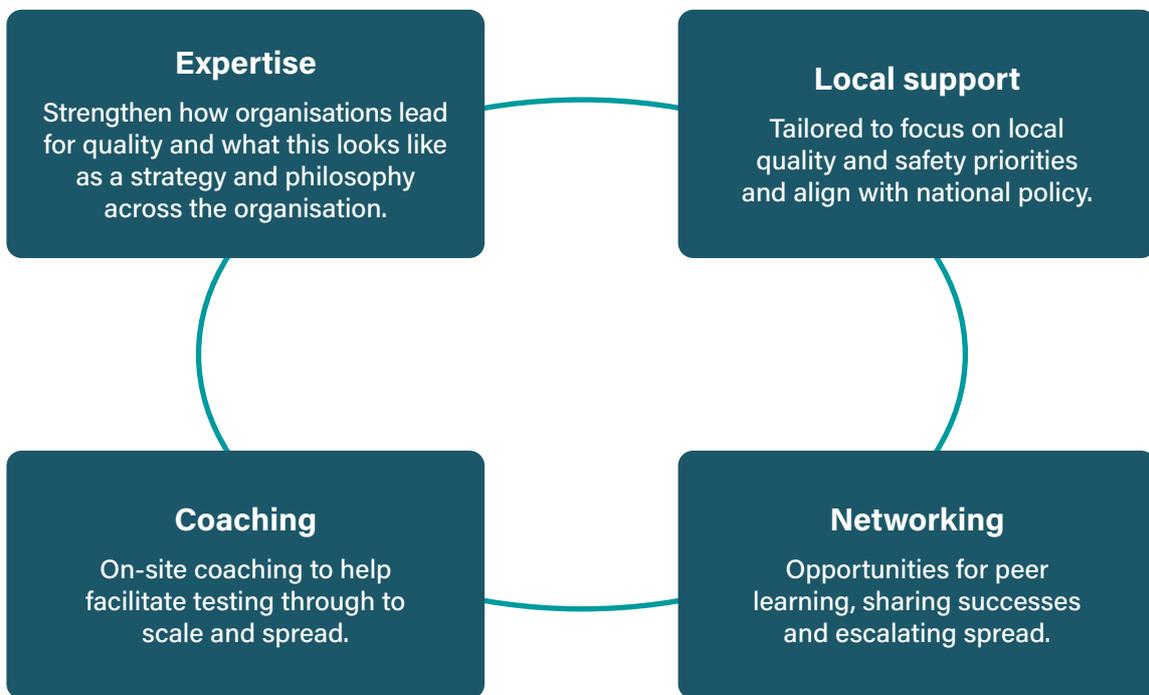
The campaign is insight led, recognising that changing people’s behaviour can be difficult and complex and often takes a long time. It uses skilled and targeted interventions to inspire and encourage health and care staff to move from awareness to new behaviours. Our aim is to build the will for improving safe care across health and care in Wales.

The campaign is also supplemented by our annual Improvement Cymru national conference and a series of improvement and safety focused seminars.

How we work

We are committed to developing Improvement Cymru to enable our people to work at their best. We bring together the energy, experience and expertise to support our colleagues who are seeking to improve their services across the health and care system. We strive to work in a way that lives up to our values and we aim to continuously improve everything that we do.

We work collaboratively with organisations to build on their existing work and provide:



We provide support to organisations through regional teams with expertise and knowledge in quality and safety. For each organisation that we support, we develop an agreement and work plan which is reviewed regularly. Where possible we coordinate learning and good practice into national collaboratives.

Our work is governed by Public Health Wales and we also report quarterly to each organisation and to Welsh Government to ensure robust oversight and alignment of our support to national and local priorities.

Improvement Cymru has several functions that work together to deliver our strategic priorities:

- **Academy:** The Academy brings together all of our improvement skills development, coaching and guidance. It makes improvement easier to learn about, practice and deliver, and provides the strong roots and connections for improvement system-wide.
- **Analytics:** Our Analytics team ensure that data and information underpin all of our work throughout the lifecycle of learning, testing and spreading and scaling. They employ effective analytical techniques to ensure delivery of data-enabled improvements.
- **Programme:** The Programme – ‘Safe Care Together’ – coaches organisations, their services and teams to test and facilitate change across the continuum of care, from primary care through to tertiary care. Working nationally and locally, the team support health and care organisations to build and sustain high quality, safe and reliable services.
- **Strategy and Innovation:** The Strategy and Innovation team lead the development of our strategic plans to operate, improve and innovate so that our support meets the needs of health and care organisations in Wales. The team work closely with key stakeholders locally and nationally to continually evolve our approach.

Our stakeholders

To achieve our aim and strategic priorities, we work with a number of individuals and organisations:

- **Welsh Government** to offer improvement expertise to inform national guidance and programmes.
- **Executive teams** to support their priorities for improvement – set nationally by Welsh Government or locally by executive teams.
- **Managers, clinicians and frontline staff** to define and test changes in their organisations that can be scaled and spread to create system-wide transformation.
- **Organisations** to bring them together to work on a common problem, share learning and spread good practice.
- **National networks, partners and other sectors** to advise on and co-design improvement work.
- **International improvement experts** to provide additional expertise to design and deliver our programmes.
- **Academia** to provide evidence-based support and to create a pipeline of ideas and innovations into evidence.
- **Q Lab Cymru** (an initiative to improve health and care for people in Wales) is a partnership between Improvement Cymru and Q, with funding from the Health Foundation.

How will we know we have made a difference?

We are working with health and care organisations to enable them to achieve system-wide improvements in the quadruple aim.

The impact of our support is measured through:

- **Health Outcomes** – Organisations working with us are achieving outstanding sustainable results in the six domains of quality.
- **Experience of working with us** – Increased number of organisations actively engaged in improvement with us and an increased positive experience of working with us.
- **Experience of working for us** – Increased positive experience of working for us.

All of our work is underpinned by Improvement Cymru's measurement strategy and a more detailed operational plan, which is co-designed with organisations.

It is our ambition that by March 2026 we will have enabled:

- Transformation in national safety outcomes through demonstrable and measurable system-level improvements in quality and safety.
- Organisations to achieve a mature and sustainable approach to building their improvement capability and applying it to their local quality and safety priorities.
- Organisations supported to embed the Quality Act in all their work.
- Wales to be an integral part of the UK improvement approach to safety.
- Impactful improvements evidenced through internal and external evaluation.

You can keep up-to-date with developments by visiting our website and signing up for our monthly e-newsletter:

www.improvement.cymru

You can also follow us on social media:

Follow us on Twitter [@ImprovementCym](https://twitter.com/ImprovementCym)

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Published September 2021

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